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~ Tablet-Laptop Hybrids! ~ Snapchat: We're Sorry! ~ Security Essentials!
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->From the Editor's Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
"~~~~~"

The new year progresses slowly; and the weather hasn't really improved yet. The cold and snow has been taking over the country, and doesn't appear to be abating - at least for any length of time. So, like we have to do day-to-day, we'll find a way to manage! Stay warm!

Until next time...

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - PlayStation Now Will Need DualShock for All Devices!
"~~~~~" Nintendo 3DS Lifetime Sales Hit 11.5 Million Worldwide!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
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PlayStation Now Will Need DualShock for All Devices

That's the word from Sony's marketing vice president, who says the company's controller will be required, regardless of whether or not play is on a console.

Sony's cloud-delivered gaming service, PlayStation Now, will require a bit of help from the company's DualShock controller.

Speaking to The Verge in an interview published Thursday, Sony PlayStation

Marketing VP John Koller confirmed that to control on-screen titles through PlayStation Now, users will "need to have the DualShock to be able to play."

A DualShock controller.

Interestingly, not all DualShocks will work on every device. The DualShock 4 will obviously work with streaming to the PlayStation 4, but the company's Bravia TV line will require DualShock 3. Tablets and smartphones will also need the DualShock 3, according to The Verge

Sony unveiled PlayStation Now earlier this week at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas. The service, set to launch this summer, will stream full PlayStation 3 games to an array of products, including the PlayStation 4, Vita handhelds, and 2014 Bravia TVs. The fact that Sony will require users to have the DualShock in-hand to play titles could generate more revenue for the company's accessories business. The big question, however, is whether consumers will accept being forced to use a controller to play games beyond the console.

Nintendo 3DS Lifetime Sales Hit 11.5 Million Worldwide

The Nintendo 3DS family, which includes the budget-priced 2DS, has sold 11.5 million units in its lifetime, Nintendo said this week.

It's been a gloomy few months for Nintendo, which struggled to draw attention to its Wii U console.

But today, the Japanese tech giant announced a rare spot of bright news: Lifetime sales of the 3DS handheld line here defined as not only the flagship 3DS, but also the 3DS XL and Nintendo 2DS devices have reached 11.5 million worldwide. Meanwhile, in 2013 alone, Nintendo sold more than 16 million packaged or downloadable games, the company said today in a press release.

"We're not slowing down in 2014," said Scott Moffitt, Nintendo of America's executive vice president of sales and marketing. "With more games featuring fan-favorite franchises on the way, the best days of Nintendo 3DS are still to come."

The 3DS, which uses stereoscopic effects to render games in 3-D without glasses, was released almost three years ago, in 2011.

"Without its 3D display, the Nintendo 3DS is a top-notch upgrade to the original Nintendo DS," Will Greenwald of PCMag.com wrote in a review at the time. "With 3D, it's a compelling handheld gaming system with a surprisingly well-implemented and immersive hook built on top of a well-designed device with a massive, rock-solid gaming library."

Initially, sales of the device were sluggish, a development that seemed to catch Nintendo off-guard. Later, the company dropped the price of the 3DS from \$249.99 to \$169.99. That price reduction, along with the arrival of the cheaper 2DS and blockbuster titles such as Legend of Zelda: A Link Between Worlds, seemed to have helped boost sales.

The same can't be said for the Wii U, which is still struggling to keep pace with the recently-released PlayStation 4 and Xbox One consoles.

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Experts Withdraw from Internet Security Conference

At least eight researchers or policy experts have withdrawn from an Internet security conference after the sponsor reportedly used flawed encryption technology deliberately in commercial software to allow the National Security Agency to spy more easily on computer users.

RSA Security, owned by data storage giant EMC Corp., has disputed claims it intentionally introduced the flawed encryption algorithm, but otherwise has declined to discuss what a published report last month described as a \$10 million government contract.

The revelation supplemented documents leaked by former NSA contractor Edward Snowden showing that the NSA tried to weaken Internet encryption.

The pullouts from the highly regarded RSA Conference represent early blowback by technology researchers and policy experts who have complained that the government's surveillance efforts have, in some cases, weakened Internet security even for innocent users.

Some U.S. companies that have agreed or been compelled to turn over customer records to the government have complained that their business relationships with customers in Europe, Asia and elsewhere are increasingly becoming arduous.

It was not immediately clear whether any researchers who still intended to make presentations at the conference would discuss the subject. Hugh Thompson, a conference organizer who works for security firm Blue Coat Systems, said the event is "an open venue where people can talk openly about security."

The researchers and experts include Mikko Hypponen, chief research officer of Finland-based antivirus provider F-Secure, and Adam Langley and Chris Palmer, who work on security practices at Google.

Christopher Soghoian, a researcher with the American Civil Liberties Union, said Tuesday on Twitter that he withdrew from the conference after having "given up waiting for RSA to fess up to the truth" regarding its development of the Dual-EC-DRBG algorithm with the NSA.

RSA issued an advisory to its customers last summer urging them not to use the algorithm, following published reports of the software's potential weaknesses. But that wasn't enough for researchers who want answers about the government's contract with RSA, which thousands of businesses use to secure their data.

RSA said in a statement last month that as a security company, it "never divulges details of customer engagements, but we also categorically state that we have never entered into any contract or engaged in any project with the intention of weakening RSA's products, or introducing potential 'backdoors' into our products for anyone's use."

The published report said RSA received the \$10 million contract from the NSA to use the agency's preferred method of number generation. The report said such a flawed algorithm in RSA's Bsafe software tool generates random numbers in such a way that it creates "backdoors" into the company's encryption products.

Organizers said next month's conference in San Francisco will host 560 speakers, and they expect more participants than the 24,000 who showed up last year.

The NSA has a history in developing encryption algorithms, with documents showing decades-old criticisms among civilian government scientists about the agency's role in developing communication standards. That includes scientists' discomfort, as early as the 1980s, over the Digital Signature Standard, a way to electronically sign documents and guarantee their authenticity. That became a federal processing standard by 1994.

In September, documents leaked by Snowden showed that the agency more recently wanted to water down Internet encryption in an effort to gather and analyze digital intelligence. In turn, the federal National Institute of Standards and Technology tried to shore up confidence in the important behind-the-scenes role it plays in setting standards that are used by consumers to make purchases online, access their bank accounts or file their income taxes electronically.

The Office of the Director of National Intelligence said that "it should hardly be surprising that our intelligence agencies seek ways to counteract our adversaries' use of encryption."

Snapchat: OK, OK, We're Sorry

The service that lets you briefly share photos and videos finally apologizes for the security snafu that revealed the names and phone numbers of 4.6 million accounts.

Love is supposed to mean never having to say you're sorry. But Snapchat has expressed both love and apologies for a bug that caused headaches for the millions of users whose names and phone numbers were exposed unexpectedly.

In a blog post on Thursday, Snapchat said it was "sorry for any problems this issue may have caused." The team also revealed a couple of changes to its Find Friends feature to better protect the phone numbers of Snapchat users.

A new update to the iOS and Android versions gives users the option to not link their phone number with their username. It also requires new users to verify their phone number before they can access the Find Friends feature. The Snapchat team also promised further improvements to the chat service to cut down on abuse.

Snapchat critics and others had been urging the company to apologize after the usernames and phone numbers of more than half of its members were posted by someone on the Web. Concerns were raised not just over the vulnerability but over Snapchat's awareness of the flaw. A few days earlier, the company admitted that a potential vulnerability would allow "a possible attack by which one could compile a database of Snapchat usernames and phone numbers."

Here's the full message from Team Snapchat:

This morning we released a Snapchat update for Android and iOS that improves Find Friends functionality and allows Snapchatters to opt-out of linking their phone number with their username. This option is available in Settings > Mobile #.

This update also requires new Snapchatters to verify their phone number before using the Find Friends service.

Our team continues to make improvements to the Snapchat service to prevent future attempts to abuse our API. We are sorry for any problems this issue may have caused you and we really appreciate your patience and support.

Love,

Team Snapchat

French Watchdog Fines Google \$203K Over Privacy Policy

After months of pleading and threatening, a French privacy watchdog has finally fined Google 150,000 (\$203,790) for what it says is a violation of the French Data Protection Act.

France's CNIL (Commission nationale de l'informatique et des libertés) also ordered the search giant to publish an official bulletin on its Google.fr homepage about the fine within eight days of the Jan. 3 notification leaving Google with three more days to consent.

At issue is an update to Google's privacy policy, which went into effect March 1, 2012, and consolidated about 70 privacy policies for all of Google's products into one. As many users noticed, the change also consolidated multiple product profiles - YouTube, Blogger, Google Search, etc. - into one profile across all services.

It was the policy consolidation that irked privacy advocates. According to is considered personal, which, based on French law, is illegal. the CNIL, Google does not sufficiently inform users of the conditions under which their personal information is handled by the search giant.

Additionally, Google is accused of not obtaining user consent before storing cookies, failing to define retention periods applicable to its processed data, and permitting itself to combine all collected data across all services.

In February 2012, CNIL, as part of the EU's Article 29 Working Party asked Google to "pause" its update, but Google refused and the change went into effect the next month. By October, CNIL issued several recommendations for

how Google might improve its policies, but no changes were made.

Almost a year ago, the French commission criticized Google for not responding to its privacy-related inquiries in a timely fashion, then proceeded to threaten sanctions and imposed a three-month deadline in June. And still Google refused to comply.

Enter the 150,000 penalty the highest that the CNIL has issued to date.

"It is justified by the number and the seriousness of the breaches stated in the case," the agency said in a release.

Google did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

In December, Spanish regulators fined Google \$1.23 million over the same issue.

LinkedIn Files Lawsuit Against Hackers Creating Thousands of Fake Accounts

LinkedIn has filed a lawsuit against hackers who have violated the site's policy against creation of numerous fake accounts.

The professional social networking site noticed the unusual transactions of the hackers after they saw several member profiles were being viewed by the alleged fake accounts since May 2013.

LinkedIn already disabled those fake accounts and enhanced its security. It decided to push through with the lawsuit even if the identity of the hackers are still unknown.

It undermines the integrity and effectiveness of LinkedIn's professional network by polluting it with thousands of fake member profiles, Jonathan Blavin, a lawyer for the company, said in the complaint.

The site said that the event transgressed not only its terms but the California Comprehensive Computer Access and Fraud Act, the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act, and the Digital Millennium Copyright Act as well.

The site's terms of use prohibit scraping, spidering, crawling, or other technology or software used to access data without the express written consent of LinkedIn or its members. In simple context, the site only allows one genuine profile for each member, but that is difficult to regulate.

According to PC Mag, these hackers have bypassed the site's security measures like UCV (Captchas, Sentinel) which limits consecutive requests from the same IP address, and FUSE, which limit account activity. They even employed an automated process to generate multiple fake profiles, thus, allowing them to view thousands of genuine accounts and scrape profiles for data. Some of those hackers even used Amazon Web Services.

To protect its users, the Mountain View, Calif.-based social networking site will request Amazon to hand them all information ties to the accounts recognized by LinkedIn.

We're a members-first organization and we feel we have a responsibility to protect the control that our members have over the information they put

on LinkedIn, LinkedIn said in a statement.

In May 2013, LinkedIn added a two-factor authentication wherein those who opt in will have to key in a numeric code sent to their phone through SMS every time log in aside from their regular password.

Every Parent's 3 Biggest Facebook Fears - And What To Do About Them

Despite its many flaws, Facebook is a pretty cool way to reconnect and stay in touch with long lost friends and relations. It's also a relatively safe environment for teens to learn the ropes of digital citizenship - safer, at least, than many of the alternatives.

But parents often have the wrong idea about Facebook and social networks in general. In fact, they have two wrong ideas.

One is that you can prevent your kids from using Facebook if you really want to. If the kid wants to be on Facebook (or any other social network), they're going to be on Facebook. Unless you lock them in a closet and/or shut off the electricity, they will find a way.

The other wrong idea is that you can let them go onto Facebook unsupervised. This is how they get into trouble. Just as you wouldn't hand a 13 year old your car keys and send him to the supermarket, you shouldn't let your young teens roam freely on any social network. You need to be right there with them, whether they like it or not (and trust me, they usually don't).

A better approach is to be aware of the dangers and teach your teens how to navigate around them. Here are the three biggest threats to your kids on social networks and how you can fix them.

Cyberbullies. The news is filled with heartbreaking stories about kids driven to suicide after being harassed on social networks. According to the Center for Innovative Public Health Research, about one out of five teenagers report being bullied online - or roughly half as many as those who are bullied in person. Even if you are friends with your kids on Facebook and other networks (and you should be), you may never see the harassment take place - most of it happens via private message or texting.

The fix: There are no easy solutions for this; the only thing you can do is be aware of the warning signs and talk to your kids about bullying. Last November, Facebook introduced a bullying prevention hub designed to help kids who are victims of this. ConnectSafely also offers a number of tips on how to respond to bullies, both on and offline.

Stalkers and other strangers. Thanks to social networks, your kids are never more than a click away from some random creep. A recent survey by McAfee reveals one out of four teenage girls admits to chatting online with total strangers, and 12 percent of them have met up with someone they first spoke to online. And while the actual number of online predators is infinitesimal relative to Facebook's 1.3 billion users, nobody wants their kids to be the unlucky part of that statistic.

The fix: Keep a close eye on any new friends your child seems to be making online, especially adults you don't know or teens whose accounts

seem a little off. Make sure your kids reveal as little personal information as they can particularly their names and locations and use Facebook's privacy settings to ensure only friends or subsets of friends can see what they post. Most important, never let them meet someone they've only talked to online without you (and a trained attack dog) in tow.

Themselves. When it comes to sharing the wrong things online, teens are their own worst enemies. (The same also holds true for adults.) Photos of your kids giving the drunk one-finger salute or obscenity-laced comments intended only for their friends invariably find a wider audience. For example, last year nearly a third of all admissions officers checked college applicants' Facebook accounts, per a survey by Kaplan Test Prep; 30 percent of the time they found something that negatively affected the applicant's chances.

The fix: The granny rule applies here: Teach your kids never to post anything they'd be ashamed to show their grandparents. Use Facebook's privacy settings to hide previous posts they should be ashamed of, even if they're not, and to limit the audience for future posts. Even then, it's pretty easy for one of their friends to download a copy and share it with the world, or upload their own incriminating images and tag your kids' names in them. If the damage is beyond repair, your teens may need to change their Facebook user names to something other than their legal names, or even delete their accounts.

The Best, Wildest Tablet-Laptop Hybrids At CES 2014

Is the laptop on its way out? With reports of tablet sales surging and laptop sales declining, you might think so. But between rumors from Apple and new product announcements at the International Consumer Electronics show (CES), laptop makers are beefing up their offerings with new hardware, software, and accessories to try and keep the laptop relevant.

A slew of blogs are reporting that Apple may revolutionize the laptop by turning it into an iPad. Well, kind of. The loosely dubbed iPad Pro could be a touchscreen iPad running the current mobile iOS operating system, but when docked into a keyboard it could run a full version of the OS X computer operating system that's currently on Apple's Macbooks. The idea is that instead of buying two devices, a laptop and an iPad, you could buy just one.

This hybrid idea makes some sense. Apple wants you to belong to their ecosystem. Once you buy an iPhone, iPad, or AppleTV, Apple wants you to buy all your media and pay to store all your files within their family of services: iTunes and iCloud.

But many who own Apple's mobile and media devices can't afford the more expensive Apple computers. An Apple hybrid device like the rumored iPad Pro could cost a little more than a Windows PC but give you an iPad as an added bonus. In return for cannibalizing its high-end laptops a bit, Apple gets a larger percentage of the market completely unplugged from the Windows/Android ecosystem and gets their iTunes and iCloud dollars for life.

But Apple's not the only company fighting for your business. Asus just announced a hybrid laptop running Windows that transforms into a tablet

running Android. Using new Intel chips that can handle both operating systems simultaneously, the Asus Transformer Book Duet is a 13.3-inch laptop that will retail for \$599. It looks like your standard Windows 8.1 touchscreen laptop, but when you undock it and hit an icon on the screen, it takes a second and becomes a very traditional (albeit large) Android tablet.

An Indian company called Micromax is also debuting a Windows Laptop/Android Tablet hybrid called the LapTab, with a planned release in February, expected price \$400-\$500.

To be fair, Viewsonic released a very similar device back in 2011, but as my friend Chris Null found when he reviewed the product, it was not ready for primetime.

But will the hybrid concept really take off? Yahoo Tech's new editor-in-chief David Pogue thinks probably not: I've lived through the phase when they made hybrid laptops that have two screens and fold up never seen one on a plane. People won't buy those and people won't buy hybrid operating system laptops either. It's too much complexity.

So while the idea of a 2-in-1 device sounds good, maybe Pogue is right. But then again, I want to see if Apple has something in mind here before I totally buy into what the new boss says.

We saw a few other early innovations in laptops and tablets. Lenovo showed off a Windows 8.1 tablet/laptop hybrid. The Miix2 is designed for movie buffs: dock the screen backwards into the spine of the device which is a JBL speaker including sub-woofer for optimized sound that is closer to the viewer and louder than normal speakers in a laptop.

A dynamic row of function keys in the Lenovo Thinkpad X1 Carbon changes as you switch applications. Mute and volume are displayed boldly when using Skype, but navigation buttons and bookmark buttons switch in when using a web browser. It's not a game changer, but I love finding smart improvements that help make everyday tasks easier.

High-resolution laptops are big at the show, and while I was impressed by the crisp images and beautiful colors of the 4K Toshiba Satellite P50t, it's really meant for graphics professionals and video editors. I shudder to think of the price tag. And to be honest, it looked good, but was it THAT much better than existing screens?? Meh.

Finally, a bonus accessory for tablets that Lenovo showed me: The Quickshot cover for the Thinkpad 8 tablet has a little dog-ear where it covers the camera. You flip it down, and it automatically launches the camera app, even if the device was in sleep mode. Pretty smart.

Red Hat and CentOS Team Up To Push Linux and Openstack

Red Hat and the CentOS Project are joining forces to drive key technologies beyond the operating system.

The aim appears to be to make it easier for the open-source community to innovate in areas such as cloud, virtualisation and software-defined networking (SDN) technologies.

Announcing the move, Red Hat said the two veteran Linux development groups are joining forces "to build a new CentOS", and that this will enable Red Hat to accelerate development of enterprise grade subscription solutions for customers and partners.

Meanwhile, the CentOS Project issued a statement saying that it will be working alongside the Fedora and Red Hat Enterprise Linux (RHEL) ecosystems to expand on its community offerings by providing a software ecosystem that other projects can easily access.

The initiative will see CentOS sponsored by Red Hat, similar to the Fedora Project that the firm uses to develop and test new technologies for incorporation into its commercial RHEL distribution.

"Cloud technologies are moving quickly, and increasingly, that code is first landing in RHEL. Today is an exciting day for the open-source community: by joining forces with the CentOS Project, we aim to build a vehicle to get emerging technologies like OpenStack and big data into the hands of millions of developers," said Red Hat CTO Brian Stevens.

As part of the process, CentOS Core team members will take roles at Red Hat, allowing them to work on the project as their primary job function. The project will be overseen by a new CentOS Governing Board, comprising the CentOS Core team plus new members nominated by Red Hat.

The move is expected to see the new CentOS emerge as a Linux distribution drawing on RHEL and other open-source technologies to provide an evolving software base that is open to variation. The intention is that other projects will be able to take CentOS and use it as a basis for developing new cloud, storage, network and infrastructure technologies.

This variant's proposal is explained on the new CentOS website:

A CentOS variant is a special edition of CentOS Linux that starts with the core distribution, then replaces or supplements a specific subset of packages. This might include replacing everything down to the kernel, networking, and other subsystems.

The purpose of a variant edition is to allow another open source project to more effectively use CentOS as a base system.

However, CentOS said in a statement that the existing community-supported CentOS Linux distribution isn't going away. Instead, "the process and methods built up around the platform however are going to become more open, more inclusive and transparent", it said.

Gmail Now Lets You Email Google+ Users, Even If You Don't Know Their Address

Google has deepened the integration between its Google+ social network and Gmail, adding a feature that auto-suggests Google+ contacts when Gmail users are typing in email recipients. In other words, you can email any of your Google+ contacts without knowing their email address, and they can email you as well.

The feature will be rolled out over the coming days to all Gmail users who also have Google+ profiles.

Gmail will auto-suggest Google+ users that the email sender has added to his Circles on the social network. (Circles is the term Google uses for connections on Google+.) However, email senders will not see the email address of the Google+ contact being auto-suggested unless the contact responds to the message, and messages from Google+ users that aren't also in your own Circles will appear in your Gmail account's Social tab, rather than the Primary tab.

Google+ users are able to control who can contact them from Gmail in this way with four options. They can opt out entirely, so that they won't appear in Gmail auto-suggest. They can limit the feature to include only people they have added to their own Circles. They can make the scope broader by extending it to people with a second degree of Circles separation, meaning people you're not connected to but who are connected to someone in your Circles. The last option is to open up the feature to anyone on Google+.

The goal of this new feature is to make it easier for Google+ users to communicate via Gmail. Google says the feature will be rolling out over the next few days.

Google has said repeatedly that its intention is to integrate Google+ broadly and deeply with its other services, sites and web applications, so that it can act as a common, underlying social networking layer. Google has integrated Google+ with Gmail, Blogger, Apps, YouTube and other products to varying degrees already.

Microsoft To Patch An Important Windows XP Vulnerability This Patch Tuesday

Microsoft's January Patch Tuesday addresses a total of four vulnerabilities including one present in Windows XP and Windows 2003, which was reportedly being exploited in the wild in November last year.

None of the bulletins in this month's Patch Tuesday are rated critical. Bulletin 2 comes with a fix for a vulnerability which was being exploited late last year allowing local users with low privileges to gain administrative control of the system. As the vulnerability couldn't be exploited remotely, the fix has been given an important rating rather than critical.

According to the advanced notification, Bulletin 1 brings in a update that affects all supported versions of Microsoft Word and Word Viewers, Bulletin 3 affects Windows 7 SP1 and Windows Server 2008 R2 SP1 and the last Bulletin 4 affects all supported versions of Microsoft Dynamics AX.

Microsoft To Abandon Security Essentials Alongside Windows XP on April 8

Microsoft is set to pull the plug on Windows XP on April 8 this year and along with that it will also abandon Security Essentials, the company has revealed.

The decision to abandon Microsoft Security Essentials comes in the form of a quiet update on Windows website. Microsoft wrote that it has been supporting Windows XP for the past 11 years and now was the time to invest

in resources in new technologies that will deliver great experience to its users.

Redmond noted that after April 8, 2014 no technical assistance and automatic updates including security updates will be extended to Windows XP.

Microsoft will also stop providing Microsoft Security Essentials for download on Windows XP on this date , wrote Microsoft.

This comes as a shock to businesses who may have decided to keep on using Windows XP beyond the EOL by opting for an annual subscription at a hefty cost. Microsoft's decision means that users should start looking for alternatives in the form of Windows 7 or Windows 8 and abandon Windows XP at the earliest.

Microsoft has dictated a few recommendations for users to keep themselves secure, but considering that OS level updates and updates for Microsoft Security Essentials will not be present, there is very little that users can do to keep themselves secure from the vulnerabilities of an outdated OS.

Oracle Set To Issue 147 Security Patches, Including 36 for Java

Oracle is about to release one of its largest security patch batches in recent memory, with some 147 fixes coming Tuesday for vulnerabilities in Java SE, its flagship database, business applications and assorted other products.

Tuesday's release will contain 36 fixes for Java SE, according to a pre-release announcement posted on Oracle's website this week. Thirty-four of the weaknesses being targeted can be exploited by an attacker over a network without the need for authentication, Oracle said.

Some 25 fixes will be released for various products in Oracle's Fusion Middleware catalog, including WebCenter and GlassFish Server. Twenty-two of them concern weaknesses that can be remotely exploited without the need for a user name and password.

Sixteen patches in Tuesday's set are aimed at Oracle's supply chain software, with six of them remotely exploitable without authentication. Another 17 fixes will be issued for PeopleSoft applications, five for Oracle's database, 11 for the Solaris OS, and nine for Oracle's virtualization software.

There will be five patches for Oracle's database, as well as 18 for MySQL, according to the announcement.

Oracle issued 127 patches in its last release, which came in October. That update included 51 fixes for Java.

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